vincing nor worth aspiring. In fine, Warburton does not meet the "demands of her imagination", and is rejected. Happiness for Isabel lies in her being herself, in her being true to her nature and aspirations, "it comes over me every now and then that I can never be happy in any extraordinary way; not by turning away, by separating myself".[4]* Marrying Warburton would mean her 'turning away', her separating herself, and these she will not do, come what may. In her quest for refinement Isabel rightly desires the encouragement of an understanding husband, but she is mistaken in thinking that people are what they appear to be.

Outer elegance, taste and manners do not necessarily reveal inner beauty. The 'deep art' of Madame Merle and Gilbert Osmond misleads Isabel into thinking that they are kindred spirits in their concern for refinement. One could have a fine mind which one might use for sinister ends. A fine mind is not always employed in the service of a moral consciousness. It is this 'generous mistake', as Ralph calls it, that involves Isabel in suffering, and leads to her final 'awareness'; knowledge of evil leads to self-knowledge and understanding, which make for the refinement of an individual. Refinement lies in a knowing acceptance of life, in sacrifice and conciliation. The 'ordeal of consciousness' is the ordeal of acquiring refinement. Once Isabel comprehends this great truth, she has little hesitation in returning to her husband. The fascination, the disillusionment, and the final awareness of Isabel are depicted with great artistry by James.

Isabel's first image of Osmond is that of "a quiet, clever, sensitive, distinguished man".*[5]' Leading "a lonely studious life in a lovely island", he has "a care for beauty and perfection so natural and so cultivated together".[46] His air of distinction, and his being so independent, so individual, so cultivated and intelligent are qualities which appeal to Isabel most. Osmond asks Isabel to "go

everywhere*
do everything; get everything out of life. Be happy-be triumphant".[47]
In Osmond, Isabel sees the man of her dreams, and when he proposes
to her, Isabel is only too glad to accept him. Ralph disagrees with
her choice, and Isabel defends herself by saying, "In everything that
makes one care for people Mr. Osmond is pre-eminent. There may be
nobler natures, but I've never had the pleasure of meeting one.
Mr. Osmond is the finest I know: he's good enough for me, and
interesting enough, and clever enough".** He is a poor man, "who